A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

JULY 4, 1784.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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ON THE

Duty of attempting the Propagation of the Gospel

AMONG OUR

MAHOMETAN and GENTOO Subjects in INDIA.

BY JOSEPH WHITE, B.D.

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SERMON

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MARK XVI. 15.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature.

WHEN our Saviour, after the completion of his earthly miniſtry, was preparing to aſcend into heaven, this was his great and laſt command to the apoſtles: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature.* Whilſt he pointed out the end, he alſo prepared the means: he ſent his Spirit from above, to fortify his apoſtles againſt danger, to conſole them under affliction, to diſpel their ſcruples, and to correct their miſtakes.

To theſe operations of the Holy Ghoſt on the minds of Chriſt's diſciples was added the power of working miracles; ſo that extraordinary and ordinary cauſes at once conſpired in ſupporting the efforts of thoſe who were friends to the goſpel, and in vanquiſhing the oppoſition of its fierceſt and moſt formidable enemies.

But the work of ſalvation ſo auſpiciouſly begun by the apoſtles, was not continued with the ſame ſpirit of charity and truth by the ſucceeding miniſters of Chriſt. More labour was exerted to allure thoſe who were already followers of his religion with ſome diſtinction of ſect or peculiarity of doctrine, than to reform the lives of the unconverted by its pure and ſimple precepts; or to convince their underſtandings by the diſplay of the genuine and characteriſtic doctrines which he had taught.

Chriſtianity, whether we conſider the promiſes of its founder, or the ſpirit of its

laws, is calculated for univerſal uſe, and claims univerſal belief. Its influence, however, muſt from the very conſtitution of the moral world neceſſarily be progreſſive; and in different circumſtances the knowledge of it will be in different degrees accelerated or retarded. The rude and uncivilized inhabitants of northern Europe more readily admitted the doctrines of the goſpel than the poliſhed and faſtidious citizens of Athens and Rome.

To the impediments which operated in particular countries, may be added other cauſes, ariſing from the general ſtate of the world. The want of a large and liberal intercourſe among the inhabitants of the earth, prevented for a time the diffuſion of Chriſtian knowledge. When nations became known to each other, the objects to which their attention was generally turned, had but little connection with the concerns of religion. Some were intent upon amaſſing wealth, and ſome upon graſping dominion. The tra-

veller was content with gratifying a vacant curioſity; and the philoſopher was chiefly employed in exploring the works of nature, without transferring his obſervations to any ſubject of utility; or in remarking the diſſimilarities of opinion and manners that exiſt among mankind, without the opportunity, or even the wiſh to reform them.

In ſuch times and under ſuch circumſtances it would have been vain to expect any plans for religious improvement, or any rational efforts for the diſſemination of religious knowledge. Yet we have reaſon, perhaps, upon the whole to congratulate ourſelves, that the propagation of the goſpel has rarely been the profeſſed aim of any nation in the ages which are paſt. The wild and romantic object of the cruſades, and the outrageous exceſſes committed during their continuance, are a proof that the Chriſtian religion, even from its own inherent qualities, is incapable of being propagated by the ſword:

and from the characters of the cruſaders we may conclude, that the ſpirit which begins in a miſtaken and religious zeal, paſſes by eaſy and imperceptible tranſition into political cunning, or inſatiable ambition. Here then we find ſome of the cauſes, in conſequence of which the light has not hitherto ſhone with effect among thoſe nations which ſtill remain overſhadowed by ignorance, or hardened in unbelief.

In ſucceeding times the labours of Chriſtian countries have been vigorouſly and ſucceſsfully employed rather in the improvement of religion, than in the propagation of it. Its evidences have been collected; its doctrines have been elucidated; the attacks of its enemies have been repelled; and the morals of its profeſſors, upon the whole, have been purified. The powers and views of the human underſtanding are limited: and probably to the ~~operation~~ combuſſion of that ſtrength which has been exerted upon the

proofs and illuſtrations of Chriſtianity, where it is believed, may be aſcribed the juſt and enlarged notions which now prevail in the nations of Europe. If more had been attempted, leſs probably would have been performed: if our zeal had been chiefly directed to the diffuſion of the Goſpel, our ideas of its uſe might have been leſs correct and leſs comprehenſive.

From the inattention of the Europeans to the propagation of the goſpel in theſe later ages of civilization, and from the contracted views or the odious barbarities of thoſe who profeſſed to propagate it in leſs enlightened times, the inhabitants of many countries as yet continue rooted in the ancient abſurdities of Pagan ſuperſtition, or deluded by the arrogant and impious pretenſions of that falſe prophet, who preſumed to go forth, like another Meſſiah, in the Eaſt, and erected a larger kingdom on earth than the Son of the living God.

But

But to thoſe, perhaps, who have a more juſt and extenſive view of the ſubject, the very delay will ultimately be found accompanied with advantages, which, while they redound to the honour of the moral government of God, ought to give new animation to our own endeavours. Would, for inſtance, Chriſtianity have been eſtabliſhed in its original purity, or to any good practical purpoſe by the rapacious conqueror, by the roving adventurer, or by the viſionary philoſopher? Where ſhould we have ſeen any traces of Chriſtian charity, or of rational piety, in that ſyſtem of opinions and that plan of ceremonial worſhip, which the frantic and ſanguinary zeal of the cruſader would probably have eſtabliſhed? Would not the gloom of papal ſuperſtition, and the ſeverities of papal domination, have been ſpread and exerciſed more widely? Might not the ſpirit of ſuperſtition have gained an acceſſion of ſtrength with the change of its object, if the goſpel had been firſt introduced by thoſe who could not ſo far underſtand it, as to

diſtinguiſh between its genuine and pretended doctrines? We, therefore, who live in theſe enlightened times, have peculiar opportunities of doing what has been left undone by our forefathers; and for planning with wiſdom, and executing with ſucceſs, what they have either neglected, or attempted to do in vain. We have no miſconceptions of Chriſtianity to ſet right, no corruptions of it to purify. As Proteſtants, we have only to bear the Bible in our hands; to expatiate upon its importance and its truth; to teach what it reveals with ſincerity; and to enforce what it commands with earneſtneſs.

Chriſtianity was at firſt eſtabliſhed by extraordinary means; but though we preſume not to look for the renovation of miracles, or to deſire the inſtantaneous gift and utterance of divers tongues, we are ſtill enabled to accompliſh the ſame conviction in the unbelieving nations, by an induſtrious acquiſition of their various languages, and an acquaintance with their local

local prejudices, their manners, and their laws. Theſe are the great duties of our miſſion; and that the taſk has been zealouſly, and in ſome degree ſucceſsfully performed, cannot be denied, without ingratitude to the piety and ſufferings of many individuals, who may juſtly be accounted happy ornaments of our own Chriſtian country and truly Chriſtian church.

But it deſerves particularly to be remarked, that while our endeavours have been directed to the inſtruction of ignorant and ſavage tribes, the taſk of converting the more enlightened nations, who are led away by the falſe pretenſions of the Arabian impoſtor, has been conſtantly declined as impracticable, or even oppoſed as inexpedient and dangerous.

To eſtabliſh both the expediency and practicability of propagating it, is the purpoſe of this diſcourſe. I mean not, however, to enter into an elaborate diſcuſſion of the general queſtion relating to the

duty

duty of baptiſing all nations. That this duty is incumbent on Chriſtians of every age; that the command delivered in the words of my text, with a more immediate reference to the Apoſtles, is equally binding upon ourſelves; that under a change of external circumſtances, we can effect by ordinary meaſures what they were inveſted with extraordinary powers to perform, are poſitions which it is unneceſſary for me to eſtabliſh. They have already been enforced with great ſtrength of argument, and great ſplendour of eloquence, by ſeveral eminent writers, whoſe learning and whoſe liberal piety have done equal honour to their country, and to that reſpectable ſociety to which they belong: ſufficient therefore it is for me to declare, that I admit the juſtice of their reaſoning, and cannot add much to its weight. But the age in which we live is, we know, diſtinguiſhed by metaphyſical refinement. The clearneſs of general deductions is, in the minds of many perſons, obſcured by the ingenuity with which particular objections

jections are employed to gratify a fondneſs for novelty, and to weaken the authority of preſcription. Detached and hypothetical arguments are ſuffered to deſtroy the collective force of proofs already methodized, and of facts already admitted. It becomes us, therefore, to diſcuſs the ſubject with ſome kind of accommodation to the tempers and prepoſſeſſions of thoſe whom we would convince: and with this view I ſhall in the following diſcourſe FIRST endeavour to refute two objections which have been alledged againſt the propriety of *any* attempt to propagate the goſpel; and SECONDLY I ſhall conſider at large the peculiar expediency of propagating it among Eaſtern nations.

It has been objected with ſome plauſibility, that the Deity delights in the variety of religions which have appeared upon the face of the earth. The propoſition is ſpecious, but not new: for whatever pretenſion philoſophers may put up to originality, the ſame thing has been ſaid by

by one of thoſe writers[a], whom it is the cuſtom of thoſe ſame philoſophers to ridicule for narrow conceptions and groveling ſuperſtition. But as the general propoſition carries in it ſomething ſpecious and impoſing, it is worth our while to analyſe it. And here we ſhall have reaſon to apprehend, that men have not argued upon ſolid grounds from themſelves to the Creator. Variety in man pleaſes from ſentiment; from a ſentiment ſui generis: and perhaps the phyſical ſource of it is to be found in the weakneſs of our underſtanding, which incapacitates us for the contemplation of good, beyond a certain aggregate; or from the fickleneſs of our paſſions, which roam from one object to another, without any ſettled principle of choice. But neither the ſentiment itſelf, nor the cauſes from which it probably proceeds, can, without impiety be aſcribed to the Deity. Here

[a] "Forſitan et varietas hujuſmodi, ordinante Deo, "decorem quendam parit in univerſo mirabilem." *Marcilius Ficinus*, in his Treatiſe on the Chriſtian Religion, chap. iv.

then

then there is no room for analogy: but there is a point of view in which another kind of analogy does exiſt, ſufficient, it ſhould ſeem, to vindicate the ways of the Creator, and to point out the duty of moral agents.

In the power of man over the animal and vegetable world, in the arts of civilization, in the means of drawing out the peculiar advantages, or counteracting the peculiar diſadvantages of climate; in the various expedients by which exiſtence is preſerved and made happy; one nation and one age differs from another. Yet we are directed by our reaſon, and impelled by our better inſtincts, to reform abuſes and extend improvements both in the phyſical and moral world. We teach the ſavage the art of healing; we aſſiſt him in fencing off the inclemency of the weather; we ſhew him the advantages of government and laws. In all theſe exertions the moral principle is inſtantly accompanied with a ſtrong

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ſentiment of approbation. The government of God was, doubtleſs, wiſe and righteous before the communication of this knowledge: but in our apprehenſions, it inevitably and juſtly becomes more defenſible and illuſtrious, when the evils of life are leſſened, or its bleſſings multiplied. The ſocial principle ſeems implanted in us for this very purpoſe. The moral agency of man is the inſtrument by which the goodneſs of God acts upon man. And in this enlarged view it is that philanthropy puts forth its whole force, and excites the higheſt approbation. Now, the religious government of God ſeems perfectly correſpondent to the natural and moral government of the world. And whereſoever there is a capacity in mankind to comprehend religious truths more largely, and to practiſe religious duties more exactly, that moment there ariſes a clear and ſtrong obligation upon us to communicate thoſe truths, and to encourage thoſe duties among our fellow-creatures. We look

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with admiration and gratitude upon the extraordinary interpoſitions, and upon the ordinary bleſſings which are conveyed to us in the courſe of his providence, independently of our own counſels and our own exertions: but ſurely his benevolence is not leſs important, and his wiſdom is even more conſpicuous, in that conſtitution of the world which enables us, and in that frame of mind which impels us, to do good one to another. In doing this good, we are effectually carrying on the gracious deſigns of our Maker; we obtain a more diſtinct and comfortable view of his government; and while we fill up the meaſure of our own duty as individuals, we complete the aggregate of that felicity which the ſpecies itſelf is capable of attaining, and which therefore we juſtly conclude to be intended for thoſe to whom it is in our power to communicate it. By theſe means the ſphere of our rational and religious powers is enlarged; the operation of phyſical and moral cauſes conſpires to the ſame end;

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the general ſtock both of virtue and of happineſs connected with it, is augmented; and in the ſucceſsful endeavours of thoſe who diffuſe the knowledge of the truth, and of thoſe who embrace it, we ſee the higheſt conſiſtence and perfection in that ſcheme of the divine government, where the intereſts of futurity are blended with thoſe of the preſent life; and where the immediate reward of each man's merit is inſeparably united with the increaſing welfare of all.

I now proceed to detect the fallacy of another ſophiſm, which owes it popularity rather to the confidence with which it is maintained, than to the ability with which it is ſupported. It is of little importance, we are told, what religion men profeſs, whether they admit one God, or more than one; whether they bow the knee at the altar of an imaginary or a real Deity, while they practiſe good morality. If then religion be a matter really indifferent and unimportant, let us entreat

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thoſe who bring the objection to be conſiſtent with themſelves, and to ſuppreſs all the complaints which they have ſo often alledged againſt the ſuperſtitious bigot, and to check the raillery in which they have indulged themſelves againſt the deluded fanatic. On the contrary, if religion have an immediate and extenſive influence upon the peace of mankind; if by regulating opinion, it even remotely affect practice, let us not haſtily aſſume that it is always productive of evil conſequences; and let us diligently endeavour to examine the circumſtances in which it may be accompanied by ſuch as are proper and efficacious. Some of its doctrines are unqueſtionably congenial to the natural ſentiments, which however diverſified by local or temporary cauſes, have prevailed in all ages and in all countries; to thoſe ſentiments which have their hold upon the wild barbarian, and the poliſhed citizen; to thoſe ſentiments, which agitate even the ſavage with wild admiration, and impreſs the philoſopher with ſerious awe. It would be

irrational to ſuppoſe that theſe ſentiments have nothing ſound in their principles; it would be falſe to aſſert that they are barren of effect; it would be daſtardly to imagine that the truths belonging to them will for ever elude enquiry; and it would be unjuſt to preſume, that when known, they will not confer ſome advantage. But the queſtion itſelf is, I am inclined to think, uſually ſtated in a manner that is both incorrect and invidious. As Tully was led by his enlarged and exact habits of thinking to lament the ſeparation between philoſophy and eloquence, ſo will every impartial and diligent enquirer find reaſon to be diſſatisfied that religion ſhould even in idea, be divided from morality. The fact is, that under proper directions, they act upon each other with an intenſe and inceſſant force; that they correct the miſconceptions, ſupply the defects, and invigorate the proper energy of each other. Both are made for man, and for both man himſelf is made; if we may argue from the ſtate where he is now placed, and from

the faculties with which he is now endowed. There are many ſituations in which, impelled as he is by various deſires, and aſſailed by various temptations, he finds ſometimes ſalutary reſtraint, and ſometimes uſeful direction, in what are called their diſtinct and appropriate powers. There are many occaſions, on which he ſtands in need of their united aid, either when preſent conſiderations are too feeble to determine him in the choice of his ultimate intereſts; or when the proſpect of futurity is for a moment too clouded and too remote, to keep him ſteady in the path which can alone preſerve his innocence. Theſe obſervations are ſtrictly true, and deſerve our moſt recollected attention, even when we are reaſoning upon the ſuppoſition that Morality and Religion can with propriety be conſidered as diſtinct in mere ſpeculation. But the terms are ſurely, upon every principle of profound and impartial examination, contracted, and diſtorted from their right

meaning. Morality, in its full and juſt ſignification, includes all the duties of which a moral agent is capable, and all the foundations of thoſe duties which can be diſcovered by a rational being. Such it appears not only in the maxims of the wiſeſt ſages, but in the laws of the beſt regulated ſtates, where, as in the inſtitutions of a Solon or a Numa, religious as well as civil regulations have been permitted to hold a diſtinguiſhed rank. Such it was in the Moſaic code; ſuch it is in thoſe rules by which the Chineſe, the Hindoos, and the Mahometans are inſtructed in the worſhip of their Creator, as well as in their conduct to their fellow-creatures; ſuch it ſeems to be in the opinions and cuſtoms which have been eſtabliſhed in the darkeſt and moſt uncivilized nations; and ſuch it continued, as they gradually emerged from ignorance and from barbariſm.

Religion, therefore, if we appeal to the common apprehenſions of mankind, forms

forms a *part* of morality: and ſurely it is not the leſs valuable, or the leſs probable, becauſe it contains directions and ſanctions that relate to the whole.

Now, if the objector maintains that many religions which have gained credit in the world are falſe, we conſider the queſtion as then ſhifted from the point of Importance to the point of Truth. We deny any inferences from the fact alledged, which inſinuate that none therefore can be true: we maintain, that if any one religion be true, it cannot be wholly unimportant; and in eſtimating that importance, we have a right to inſiſt that the compariſon be made, not only between the hypothetical conſequences of any religion or none, but between the actual conſequences of that, which we allow with the objector to be falſe, and that, which in oppoſition to him, we are prepared to defend as the true.

As ſcholars, we admire the compoſition, and under many uſeful reſtrictions, we may, as philoſophers, admit the doctrine of the Univerſal Prayer, in which a writer of our own nation has united the moſt beautiful poetry with the moſt ſublime devotion. He there means to affirm that Jews, and Heathens, and Chriſtians, equally acknowledged the exiſtence of a ſupreme and intelligent cauſe, however they might diſtinguiſh him by different names, adore him in different forms, and even aſcribe to him different attributes. But from this fact, which we readily admit, he does not draw the hazardous and unfair concluſion, which alone I am concerned to refute. He does not ſay, that the notions entertained of the Deity, were equally juſt; that the worſhip they paid him was equally acceptable; and that either in a ſpeculative or a practical, in a philoſophical or a religious light, it was totally *indifferent* whether our faith was directed to the Olympian Jove, or to the inviſible Lord of Heaven and Earth.

In every country, it is true, God has given ſome witneſs of himſelf; has implanted ſome notions of his being and perfections; has received ſome inſtances of adoration and obedience, from thoſe whom he has made. In every country alſo he has given proofs of his creative power and providential care; has beſtowed ſome advantages which deſerve the gratitude of mankind; and expoſed them to ſome evils, for protection from which they muſt have recourſe to his gracious aſſiſtance, conveyed to them (as indeed moſt of his bleſſings are) by intermediate cauſes, by human activity, and human prudence. But in his religious as well as in his temporal diſpenſations, there is a great and an inconteſtable inequality: and to correct that inequality is often within our power; and when in our power, it aſſuredly becomes our indiſpenſable duty. We relieve, as was before obſerved, the diſtreſſed; we are conſcious in relieving them, of employing the means which God has given us, to the

ends for which he deſigned them: and in the hour of ſolemn and deep meditation, we are led to admire that conſtitution of the univerſe, by which man is qualified and impelled to promote the happineſs of man; and by which alſo phyſical evil becomes ſubſervient to the production of moral good. What then, I would aſk, are the reaſons which prevent our application of the ſame principles in the inſtruction of the ignorant and the miſtaken? We communicate the improvements of law, and the diſcoveries of ſcience: why then are we to be indifferent about imparting juſter notions of religion? Is truth leſs congenial to the mind upon theſe ſubjects than error? Is it ſo difficult to be communicated, as always to baffle our endeavours, or ſo inſignificant when communicated, as in no degree to reward them? The capacity of mankind to receive and to profit by religious inſtruction is, I confeſs, different in different circumſtances. Great candour, doubtleſs, and great caution are neceſſary in conducting the

the work. The progreſs of it will be retarded by ſluggiſh apprehenſion, by languid attention, or by perverſe oppoſition. The effects of it may, for a time, be counteracted by preconceived opinions, by inveterate habits, by the paſſions and propenſities of individuals; or by peculiarities in the manners, and it may be, the climates of a whole people. But theſe cauſes operate ſurely in all our attempts to enlighten men by knowledge, and to meliorate them by laws: and if the experiment be made ſucceſsfully in the one caſe, why ſhould we deſpair of ſucceſs in the other?

Every change that we attempt in the laws and the employments of a people, muſt be made, if it be made wiſely, with ſome reference to their religious tenets and modes of worſhip. The degree and the order in which we endeavour to improve them reſpectively, will depend upon a variety of cauſes which it will require our utmoſt ſagacity to aſcertain, and

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our utmoſt caution to manage. But all are capable of improvement: and that ſcheme has the faireſt chance for ſpeedy and complete execution, is moſt noble in itſelf, and will be moſt beneficial in its effects, which by a well-proportioned attention to the parts, beſtows harmony and ſtability upon the whole.

We have ſeen in a former Diſcourſe, that European nations are indebted for their ſuperiority to their religious creed, as well as to their civil inſtitutions, or their philoſophical attainments; that each of theſe moral cauſes has a wide and viſible influence; that there is a ſphere for their united as well as for their diſtinct agency; that they aſſiſt in the improvement of each other; that they have their principles in the common nature of man; and that in their well directed and well exerted energies they conſpire to one common end, in enlarging our intellectual powers, in meliorating our ſocial affections, and in promoting our true and pro-

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per happineſs, as Citizens, as Chriſtians, and as Men.

I aſſume therefore confidently the efficacy of religion; and I am warranted by experience in contending for the beneficial efficacy of the Chriſtian. In nations already baptized, we condemn the bigot and the fanatic upon principles both of revelation and reaſon; I mean upon their fundamental and conſiſtent principles; upon the expreſs precepts of the one, and upon the cleareſt dictates of the other. We know that the illiberal ſpirit of the bigot, and the abſurd notions of the fanatic, have a direct and unfriendly influence upon their moral conduct, and render them unfit for the preſent as well as the future world. Bigots and fanatics are to be found in thoſe nations whom we wiſh to baptize: the ſource of their imperfections lies in the wrong apprehenſions they entertain of the Deity himſelf, of the laws which he preſcribes, and of the means by which his favour is to be

our utmoſt caution to manage. But all are capable of improvement: and that ſcheme has the faireſt chance for ſpeedy and complete execution, is moſt noble in itſelf, and will be moſt beneficial in its effects, which by a well-proportioned attention to the parts, beſtows harmony and ſtability upon the whole.

We have ſeen in a former Diſcourſe, that European nations are indebted for their ſuperiority to their religious creed, as well as to their civil inſtitutions, or their philoſophical attainments; that each of theſe moral cauſes has a wide and viſible influence; that there is a ſphere for their united as well as for their diſtinct agency; that they aſſiſt in the improvement of each other; that they have their principles in the common nature of man; and that in their well directed and well exerted energies they conſpire to one common end, in enlarging our intellectual powers, in meliorating our ſocial affections, and in promoting our true and proper

per happineſs, as Citizens, as Chriſtians, and as Men.

I aſſume therefore confidently the efficacy of religion; and I am warranted by experience in contending for the beneficial efficacy of the Chriſtian. In nations already baptized, we condemn the bigot and the fanatic upon principles both of revelation and reaſon; I mean upon their fundamental and conſiſtent principles; upon the expreſs precepts of the one, and upon the cleareſt dictates of the other. We know that the illiberal ſpirit of the bigot, and the abſurd notions of the fanatic, have a direct and unfriendly influence upon their moral conduct, and render them unfit for the preſent as well as the future world. Bigots and fanatics are to be found in thoſe nations whom we wiſh to baptize: the ſource of their imperfections lies in the wrong apprehenſions they entertain of the Deity himſelf, of the laws which he preſcribes, and of the means by which his favour is to be

be conciliated. If then Chriſtianity, honeſtly and rationally taught, be likely to correct their errors, to aſſuage their groundleſs fears, to ſoften their unſocial tempers, and eventually to open a wider field for their talents and their virtues, we are bound from a mere regard to its uſefulneſs, to open every avenue by which the knowlege of it may be conveyed to diſtant nations. If we are perſuaded of its truth, we may ſafely truſt the conſequences of its propagation to that omniſcient Being, who has implanted in us an inſtinctive love of what is true, and has prepared our minds for the reception of it from adequate inſtruments, and upon favourable opportunities. If we are impreſſed with a ſincere and grateful ſenſe of its divine original, we ſhall manifeſt that ſincerity and that gratitude, by our ardent wiſhes, and our unwearied endeavours to make other men partakers of thoſe bleſſings which we ourſelves enjoy. Truth, we allow, when metaphyſically analyſed, derives its moral importance from

from its utility. But we contend, in our turn, that utility is, in an abſtract point of view, naturally connected with truth; and therefore, with a reference to both, we inſiſt upon the expediency of propagating the Goſpel.

As to the obſtinacy with which nations adhere to thoſe religious tenets, which they have imbibed from education and contemplated with reverence, it furniſhes no ſolid argument againſt our project: it is indeed a juſt and weighty reaſon for an increaſe of caution, and on the very ſame ground of difficulty, it becomes an additional incentive to an increaſe of diligence. You diffuſe the light of philoſophical knowlege, though it muſt lay open the fallacy and abſurdity of many opinions, which tradition has preſerved concerning the origin and ſtructure of the world. You introduce ſuch laws and cuſtoms, as in a courſe of time will bring on a material revolution in the manners of the nations with whom you

are connected, and militate againſt many ritual obſervances, and, perhaps, ſome moral precepts which are now protected by the ſuppoſed commands of the Almighty. Do you wiſh then, that they ſhould deliberately, and habitually diſobey the religion they believe to be true; or when you have gradually worn away the force of prejudice, and taught them by more comprehenſive and preciſe modes of reaſoning to reject it as falſe, do you mean to provide no ſubſtitute? When your ſocial habits and civil inſtitutions are eſtabliſhed on a firm foundation, and ſupported by general approbation and general concurrence, you may ſurely endeavour to avail yourſelves of the prepoſſeſſion which, in the minds of conſiderate and impartial men, they cannot fail to excite in favour of your religious code.

Doubts of a different kind from thoſe I have examined under a former head, have ariſen with ſenſible men, how far the propagation of the Goſpel in ſome countries,

countries, be upon the whole practicable or deſirable: whether the doctrines of it would not be imperfectly underſtood, or groſsly miſconceived, or profeſſed to no good purpoſe; whether as Gentiliſm and Judaiſm infected Chriſtianity, ſo the favourite and inveterate ſuperſtitions of the American idolaters, would not ſoon debaſe its purity, and counteract its efficacy. But this objection does not reach with its full force to the Mahometans of the Eaſt, who are lifted far above the ignorance of barbarians and the ferocity of ſavages; and a wider ſcope ſurely would be here given for inſtructing them ſucceſsfully in the ſublimer doctrines of Chriſtianity. The ſavage, whoſe gloomy and confined theology was perhaps the growth of turbulent paſſion and wild fancy, might eaſily be perſuaded to admit the exiſtence of miracles; from the ſimilitude they bear to the ſuppoſed interpoſitions of his deities; from his incapacity to aſcertain the force of natural cauſes; and from a kind of inſtinctive propenſity to believe

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in thoſe which are extraordinary. But the Mahometans, while they admit the principle of miracles, might be made more diſtinctly to conceive, and more readily to embrace the argument from prophecy, in all its nice dependencies and gradual evolutions. Among them we are not to contend with the boiſterous tempers and ſtubborn habits which characteriſe the human ſpecies in a ſtate of barbariſm: we ſhould find them already a race of men and citizens, who by an eaſy tranſition might paſs to a full belief of the doctrines of Chriſtianity.

For the propagation of the Goſpel in the Eaſt many inducements and advantages are held out to us, which the ſavage condition of the Indians of America does not afford. The Mahometans are an immenſe body of men, natives of populous and mighty empires, greatly exceeding in population the kingdoms of Chriſtendom, and almoſt entirely occupying one quarter of the habitable globe. They are the ſubjects of regulated ſtates; they are

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the obſervers of eſtabliſhed laws; civilized by the intercourſe of agriculture and commerce, and poliſhed by the uſe of letters and of arts. They are neither involved in the impiety of atheiſm, nor the darkneſs of idolatry; and their religion, falſe as it is, has many articles of belief in common with our own: which will facilitate our labours in diffuſing the true faith, and diſpoſe them to receive it. They believe in one God, creator and lord of all; to whom they attribute infinite power, juſtice, and mercy. They hold the immortality of the ſoul; and expect a future judgment, a heaven and a hell; they acknowledge an univerſal deluge; they honour the patriarch Abraham as the firſt author of their religion; they acknowledge Moſes and Chriſt to have been great prophets, and allow the Pentateuch and the Goſpel to be ſacred books.

Since, therefore, by our holy ſcriptures, the duty of attempting the univerſal converſion of mankind is amply

aſcertained; and ſince we find among the followers of Mahomet ſuch favourable prepoſſeſſions and eſtabliſhed doctrines, as will render eaſy the approach to their converſion, neither force of obligation, nor proſpect of ſucceſs is wanting, to encourage our progreſs and animate our zeal. By the miniſters of the Goſpel the examples of thoſe memorable times ſhould never be forgotten, when the rigid and cruel edicts of Decius and Diocleſian were ineffectual to ſubdue the ſacred enthuſiaſm of thoſe faithful diſciples of Chriſt, who, for the ſake of gaining one proſelyte to heaven, made a voluntary ſacrifice of every temporal enjoyment, and nobly forfeited their liberties and lives. Compared with what they ſuffered, and performed, how little is our labour, and how mild our obligation? To contend with the blindneſs and obſtinacy of an idolatrous and wicked age, and to groan under the oppreſſions of an overſpreading tyranny, was their ſevere, but glorious fate. It is ours to propagate the ſame

religion

religion in countries to which our commerce has extended, when its truths have been confirmed by the revolution of ſucceeding centuries, and when its excellence has been illuſtrated by the wiſdom and experience of more enlightened times.

If any further inducement be wanting to excite our endeavours and animate our hopes in this work of charity, it is the conſideration that in remote and extenſive provinces, *ſubject to our own empire*, and obedient to our own laws, millions of the inhabitants *ſtill* wander in darkneſs and error; ſome deluded by the Mahometan impoſture, and others bigoted to the more ancient and more abſurd ſuperſtition of Brama.

The relation of a connected government, like that of a common country, is a tie that nature has made, and that never ſhould be violated, or forgotten. Actuated, I would hope, by this exalted principle, we have already extended to our

fellow-ſubjects in Indoſtan many of thoſe natural and civil rights, which we have ſo long regarded with an honeſt pride, and vindicated with a noble ardour.

It behoves us, therefore, as Men, as Engliſhmen, and as Chriſtians, to go farther. Let it not be ſaid, that even at this boaſted period of humanity and ſcience, when we are diffuſing the bleſſings of civil freedom over the remoteſt branches of the empire, no attempt is made to emancipate them from the chains of ſuperſtition.

Our ſettlements in India occupy a far greater extent than the Britiſh empire in Europe; yet in no part of theſe wide provinces has one ſingle effort been exerted to introduce the glorious light of the goſpel, and to diſpel the gloom which has for ages inveloped the wretched inhabitants. All the differences in religion which the native has ever known, are in reality but different modifications of error and impiety;

piety; and though he refuſe to ſubſcribe to one impoſture, he derives from that refuſal no other advantage than the unhappy alternative of paying an implicit and ſervile reverence to another.

The grand diſtinction, however, is that which ſeparates the Mahometans from the Gentoos. The latter were the original inhabitants; and their ſuperſtition was of high antiquity and diſtinguiſhed reputation in the country. The religion of Mahomet found its way into the diſtant regions of India by means ſimilar to thoſe by which it had been diffuſed over the intervening kingdoms. Within a century after the death of the impoſtor, the enterpriſing caliphs, amidſt the rage of conqueſt by which they were animated, carried their arms into this country: and though unable to ſubject any conſiderable part to their empire and religion, yet they continued to harraſs it with repeated incurſions through the ſucceeding ages. At length, however, in

the fourteenth century of the Chriſtian æra, directed by the ſame ſpirit of enthuſiaſm, the bolder genius of Tamerlane prompted him to engage in the conqueſt of theſe vaſt and populous regions, for the ſole and avowed purpoſe of reſcuing the inhabitants from the abſurdities of Paganiſm, and diſſeminating among them the ſaving truths of the holy religion of Iſlam!

In the proſecution of this romantic and viſionary project he deluged the plains of Indoſtan with the blood of thouſands of idolaters, and continued his impetuous career till at length oppoſition ceaſed before him, and the ſanguinary doctrines of his pretended prophet were finally eſtabliſhed on the ruins of the milder ſuperſtition of Brama.

Since the age of Tamerlane, Mahometaniſm has been uniformly the religion of the government of India: the Gentoos, however, are ſtill ſaid to exceed in number

number the Mahometans in the proportion of ten to one *, and to retain at this day an originality of character, which neither the ſudden violence of conqueſt, nor the ſlow operations of time have in any conſiderable degree effaced.

The religious creed of the Gentoos is a ſyſtem of the moſt barbarous idolatry. They acknowledge, indeed, one ſupreme God: yet innumerable are the ſubordinate deities whom they worſhip; and innumerable alſo are the vices and follies which they aſcribe to them. With a blindneſs which has ever been found inſeparable from Polytheiſm, they adore as the attributes of their gods the weakneſſes and paſſions which deform and diſgrace human nature; and their worſhip is in many reſpects not unworthy of the deities who are the objects of it. The favour of beings which have no exiſtence but in the imagination of the ſuperſtitious enthuſiaſt, is conciliated by ſenſeleſs ce-

* See Orme's Hiſtory of Indoſtan.

remonies and unreaſonable mortifications; by ceremonies which conſume the time which ſhould be dedicated to the active and ſocial duties; and by mortifications which ſtrike at the root of every lawful and innocent enjoyment. What indeed ſhall we think of a religion, which ſuppoſes the expiation of ſins to conſiſt in penances, than which fancy cannot ſuggeſt any thing more rigorous and abſurd; in ſitting or ſtanding whole years in one unvaried poſture; in carrying the heavieſt loads, or dragging the moſt weighty chains; in expoſing the naked body to the ſcorching ſun; and in hanging with the head downward before the fierceſt and moſt intolerable fire?

But it were endleſs to dwell on all their ſuperſtitious rites. The following, which has been frequently confirmed to us without prejudice and without deſign, is alone ſufficient to awaken every tender feeling of our hearts, and to incite us to the exertion of every effort which may tend to wean the minds of this unenlightened people

people from practices ſo impious and inhuman. It will eaſily be imagined, that I allude to that moſt cruel cuſtom, by which the wife of the Gentoo is induced to burn herſelf on the pile which conſumes the aſhes of her huſband; a cuſtom, if not abſolutely enjoined by her religion, yet at leaſt ſo far recommended by it, as to render the breach of it, in ſome caſes, ſubject to the utmoſt ignominy and deteſtation.

The facts which I have recited, as well as many others of equal importance, are too well known to be denied. From theſe alone every humane heart will at once infer the neceſſity of endeavouring to ſubſtitute the pure and rational religion of Jeſus in the place of a creed ſo ſhocking to our reaſon, and to our finer ſenſibilities.

Happily, however, there are circumſtances which ſeem favourable to ſuch an attempt. For, that natural ſagacity which

is the national characteriſtic of the Gentoos, the auſtere and abſtemious life which they lead, the gentleneſs and ſerenity of their temper, their belief of a future ſtate, and the idea of one ſupreme God, which mixes even with the worſhip of their ſubordinate deities; all ſeem to afford a rational ground for us to expect their converſion.

But in what manner muſt we proceed in this intereſting and moſt arduous project? Have not ſchemes of religious reformation been planned with plauſible appearances in all ages; and in all have they not been foiled by real and ſtubborn difficulties? Are not the moſt approved reaſonings, and the moſt glowing eloquence, defeated by ignorance or obſtinacy in thoſe who are to be taught? Has not the indiſcretion or raſhneſs of the teacher, in too many inſtances, entirely counteracted his benevolence, however ſincere, and his activity, however unwearied? Let us not be diſcouraged by theſe general complaints

plaints, from taking a large and exact view of the particular queſtion we are now called upon to examine.

The awful ſubjects of religion are to be treated differently in different circumſtances. Some there are, whoſe minds are enlightened by ſcience, enlarged by long and extenſive intercourſe with the world, and invigorated by habits of profound and intenſe meditation: the faith of ſuch men will be unſhaken, and their devotion will be ardent, not from the aid of external forms, but by ſilent and ſecret adoration of the Deity, and by deep reflection upon the moſt extenſive and abſtracted truths of religion, both natural and revealed. But it would be viſionary and dangerous to expect the ſame beneficial effects among perſons of talents leſs cultivated, and of views leſs extenſive. Experience tells us, that with the bulk of mankind ſome caution is neceſſary in the ſelection of topics adapted to their apprehenſion, and that much ſagacity muſt be employed

employed in the uſe of all thoſe collateral and external expedients which are to awaken their attention, and to direct it when awakened, to proper objects. When therefore Chriſtianity is attempted to be propagated among the inhabitants of the Eaſt, the attention of thoſe to whom we preach it, muſt be confined to doctrines ſyſtematically inculcated, and to a ritual punctually obſerved. We muſt not leave the great truths of ſalvation fluctuating with wild uncertainty in the minds of thoſe who embrace them. To underſtandings which have recently emerged from the groſſeſt ſuperſtition, we muſt not commit the taſk of *appointing for themſelves* the modes of conciliating the divine favour by humble ſupplication and fervent thankſgiving. There is ſomething attractive, we know, in the regularity and decency of preſcribed forms; there is ſomething highly inſtructive and perſuaſive in the plainneſs and preciſion of doctrines methodically propoſed to the underſtanding. But in the *manner* of pre-

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paring theſe doctrines and theſe forms lies the chief difficulty we have to contend with: and it muſt be confeſſed, that Chriſtian churches have often brought diſgrace upon the general cauſe of Chriſtianity, by an extravagant and undiſtinguiſhing attachment to their own peculiar tenets and favourite ceremonies. They have ſuppoſed the followers of other ſyſtems equally able to comprehend what habit has familiarized, and equally diſpoſed to adopt what conviction has endeared, to themſelves.

The efforts of miſſionaries, whom the policy or the zeal of the Romiſh church may have hitherto employed, have ſometimes incurred the contempt of the Infidel, and ſometimes provoked the indignation of the Philoſopher. They have been marked rather by eagerneſs to multiply converts, than by ability to promote the real happineſs of thoſe that were converted. They appear to have ſubſtituted one ſpecies of ſuperſtition for another

other; to have darkened the underſtanding with error; and to have poiſoned the heart with bigotry.

But the advocates of ſound and rational Chriſtianity will not be expoſed to theſe formidable imputations. Whatever ſpecious and refined ſpeculations may ſuggeſt, upon the natural pliancy of the human mind in receiving, and on its natural firmneſs in retaining religious impreſſions, experience is our ſafeſt guide in dealing with the maſs of mankind, who are prone to run into the moſt oppoſite extremes; to be ſometimes fickle, and ſometimes obſtinate; ſluggiſh in one moment, and, in the next, precipitate. Our regulations muſt, therefore, be adapted to the real *weakneſſes* as well as capacities of thoſe whom we would inſtruct. Some ſpecific doctrines, as I before obſerved, muſt be taught, and ſome particular ceremonies muſt be recommended: we muſt intereſt the imagination, whilſt we convince the judgment. But the

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taſk, arduous as it is, may be properly and effectually performed by a ſtrict adherence to the genuine and characteriſtic principles of Proteſtantiſm. The leading, the eſſential, the moſt indubitable, and the moſt important doctrines of Chriſtianity, muſt be propoſed to the eaſtern nations expreſſed in the cleareſt language, and ſupported by the moſt luminous arguments. When the errors and prejudices of thoſe whom we inſtruct, are, in ſome meaſure, ſubdued; and when their minds have been gradually prepared for a fuller delineation of evangelical truth, we may *then*, and then only, venture to propoſe thoſe doctrines which are of a more myſterious and recondite nature. We muſt diſcloſe them gradually, and with a ſpirit of the moſt enlarged toleration to thoſe perſons, whoſe ſcruples cannot be entirely vanquiſhed, and whoſe errors cannot be *at once* removed.

In overcoming the rooted and favourite prepoſſeſſions of the Gentoos and Maho-

metans, there, doubtleſs, will be room for the moſt accurate diſcrimination, and for the niceſt delicacy. Their ignorance muſt be treated with tenderneſs, and their well meant, though miſtaken piety, will demand ſome portion even of reverence. Every truth we communicate, muſt be aſſiſted and recommended by the method in which it is to be communicated. It muſt carry along with it the brighteſt and moſt unequivocal evidence, not only of the firm conviction it has impreſſed upon the judgment of the teacher, but of the amiable effects which it has wrought upon his temper, his actions, and his words.

I would have it underſtood, that no artifice, however plauſible, no force, however indirect, ſhould be employed by proteſtant miſſionaries; and that my wiſh is rather to have Chriſtianity taught as a true revelation, than to ſee it eſtabliſhed ſuddenly upon the ruins of any falſe religion, which may have formerly prevailed. By theſe means we ſhall obtain

tain all the advantages, which the Romans enjoyed, by tolerating the cuſtomary worſhip and ancient theology of the nations whom they governed; and ſurely, from the ſuperior excellence of the doctrines which we endeavour to diſſeminate, and by which we profeſs to be ourſelves directed, we ſhall ſtand a fairer chance of making converts, than a heathen miſſionary; and ſhall derive greater benefits from thoſe who are converted, than paganiſm could confer on its ſincereſt and warmeſt votaries.

Similarity in religious perſuaſion certainly enlarges the ſphere of ſocial intercourſe; facilitates the progreſs of civilization; and invigorates the operations of lawful government. This ſimilarity it will be in our power to effect in ſome degree by judicious and temperate meaſures, in ſupporting the claims of Chriſtianity over the popular ſyſtems of belief that are now approved in the Eaſt. Let it, however, not be ſaid, that tenets ſo op-

poſite to each other cannot be taught with propriety, or even with ſafety, in the ſame country. Experience informs us that a Mahometan can obey the ſame laws, and purſue the ſame civil employments with the Gentoo: and doubtleſs, what is actually practiſed by the profeſſors of opinions ſo romantic and diſcordant, may be yet more practicable under the mild and auſpicious influence of the Goſpel. The energies of a firm and watchful government will repreſs the furious ſallies of zeal; will protect all parties indiſcriminately in their adherence to what they conceive to be truth; and at the ſame time will gradually prepare their minds for an impartial and ſerious diſcuſſion of ſuch evidence, as may be brought to ſupport the religion which really and ſolely *is the true*.

To the ſcheme here propoſed, there, doubtleſs, is an objection which a groveling and ſordid ſpirit of covetouſneſs is too

too apt to cheriſh. "At preſent, it "may be ſaid, the credulous Maho-"metan, and ſuperſtitious Gentoo, are "unaſpiring in their views, and tract-"able in their diſpoſitions. Their opi-"nions do not diſturb our tranquillity, "and their ceremonies only provoke our "contempt. But if they ſhould here-"after ſee the fallacy of the one, and the "abſurdity of the other: if they ſhould "catch the manly and active ſpirit which "diſtinguiſhes the inhabitants of Chriſtian "countries: if the bolder exerciſe of their "intellectual faculties ſhould beget a juſter "ſenſe of their civil and political rights, "what may be the effects of ſuch a revo-"lution upon us? Actuated by nobler "feelings than they have hitherto experi-"enced, they will quickly exchange con-"fidence for diſtruſt, and ſubmiſſion for "reſiſtance. They will compel us in our "turn, to drag the yoke of ſervitude; or "they will drive us from their ſhores as "a race of mercileſs ruffians, and in-"ſatiable plunderers."

Now on the broad and ſolid principles of philanthropy and revelation, I ſee nothing in this popular objection which ought to ſhake our conviction, or to ſlacken our activity. A religion which enlivens the induſtry, and animates the courage of thoſe who profeſs it; which awakens in them a more correct and more exquiſite ſenſe of their duties as men, and their importance as citizens; ſuch a religion, I ſay, carries with it many bright proofs of its utility and its truth. May we not then expect that the Philoſopher will view the ſcheme I am propoſing with fixed approbation, and that the Chriſtian will embrace it with ardent fondneſs?

However we may attempt to varniſh over the fact, the ſpirit of commerce will often ſeize, and often create opportunities of rapacity; and in regions very diſtant from the ſeat of empire, where the directions of law are frequently indiſtinct,

and the reſtraints of ſhame are always feeble, the iron ſcourge of oppreſſion will ſometimes be lifted up againſt unprotected innocence, and conſpicuous merit; againſt ignorance which cannot aſcertain its privileges, and weakneſs which cannot aſſert them. But ſurely no plan of commerce can be laſting, and upon the whole advantageous; no form of government can be venerable or defenſible; which excludes mutual truſt, and does not provide for the mutual benefit of both parties, who are concerned with the one or ſubject to the other. On the contrary, if we communicate the arts, the laws, and the religion of Europe to Eaſtern nations; if we ſhew them by our works as well as by our words, that we are the diſciples of Jeſus; if we labour both for their ſpiritual and their temporal welfare; there can be no reaſon to doubt of an ultimate and an adequate reward. They to whom we have given ſo ſure an earneſt of our ſincerity and of

our benevolence, will no longer view us with coldneſs as ſtrangers, or with ſuſpicion as foes. They will treat us, becauſe they are *themſelves treated*, as fellow-citizens and fellow-Chriſtians; they will ſhare with us in the common danger, and toil with us for the common intereſt; becauſe they will conſider themſelves as partakers of the ſame bleſſings here, and heirs of the ſame promiſes hereafter.

Such meaſures it is true, may prevent individuals from amaſſing exorbitant wealth, from revelling in luxurious voluptuouſneſs, and from graſping at enormous dominion. But ſuch meaſures, even if they tend to the removal of theſe outrageous evils *alone*, are not unworthy of our regard; and they deſerve a yet larger ſhare of our attention, if, in conſequence of our honeſt and ſtrenuous endeavours to execute them, the general harmony of the Europeans and Orientals would be more effectually ſecured, and the gene-

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ral happineſs of both promoted more ſucceſsfully.

Zealous in the recommendation of this purpoſe, I regard not the cold and miſtaken policy of ſome, who would ſeparate our religious from our civil intereſts. This country has ever boaſted with equal pride and juſtice the purity of its worſhip, and the excellence of its government. The ſame happy æra gave birth to each: out of the aſhes of deſpotiſm and ſuperſtition they both aroſe; and if they fall, they will fall together. Narrow therefore and falſe is that philanthropy, which pretends to be ſolicitous for the rights and liberties of mankind, while for their eternal welfare it employs no meaſures, and even profeſſedly feels no concern.

In what better purpoſe can a wiſe and virtuous nation be employed, than in propagating its religion,

wherefoever its laws are obeyed? If it ſeeks to protect, and not to impoveriſh; if it deſires to govern, and not to enſlave, it will be equally intent to diffuſe among its ſubjects the rights of freedom, and the privileges of Chriſtianity.

And at what period in the hiſtory of our empire could this attempt be made, with a more favourable proſpect of ſucceſs than at preſent? The extreme importance of Indian wealth to our commerce, and the growing connection between the principles of that commerce, and of the government which is to protect it, have awakened the attention of the legiſlature to ſubjects equally extenſive and intereſting. The code which directs the belief and influences the actions of the Hindoos, has been lately tranſlated into the vernacular language, and ſubmitted to the inſpection of public curioſity. Hence we are enabled to trace the long and cloſe connection that ſubſiſts

ſiſts between the religious and civil laws of the Hindoos. We can diſcern what errors are almoſt impregnable to argument, and what may be overcome by cautious and well-directed oppoſition. We ſee in their full magnitude the futility of their traditions, and the abſurdity of their ceremonies. We can mark the ſlow and imperfect progreſs of civilization and ſcience; and ſhould therefore be careful to make their future progreſs in religious knowledge keep a due proportion to thoſe improvements, in the attainment of which we are preparing to aſſiſt them in ſocial life. We cannot indeed ſo far adopt the policy of the Romans as to naturalize * any part of their mythology, becauſe *all* the parts of it are in *all reſpects* incompatible with our own religion. But we may gradually leſſen their reverence for their ſacred records, by exerciſing their faith on *other* more undoubted interpoſitions of the Deity. When European cuſtoms have

* See Halhed's Preface to the Code of Gentoo Laws.

been

been in ſome degree introduced among the Hindoos, we ſhall find them leſs ſolicitous for the obſervance of Eaſtern ceremonies. When European ſcience has dawned upon their minds, we may ſee them leſs tenacious of their old opinions. The auſpicious effects of our laws will create ſome kind of prejudice in favour of our religion; and when they find it ſo perfectly exempt from the ſanguinary and intolerant ſpirit of Mahometaniſm, they may by degrees be brought to liſten to the evidences by which it is ſupported, and the ſanctions by which it is enforced. For incorporating their laws with our own, we have formed a plan, the completion of which is likely to do honour to our national policy and national magnanimity. Yet if we mean only to exempt the inhabitants of the Eaſt from temporary inconvenience and oppreſſion; if we do not intend to exalt them gradually in the ſcale of ſocial creatures; if we exert no endeavours for enlarging the ſphere of

their

their future ſpeculation and *moral improvement*, we ſhall leave the work ſhamefully imperfect; and ſubſtitute, I fear, ſelfiſh cunning for genuine and enlarged wiſdom. It would, indeed, be a refined ſpecies of mockery to hold out the bleſſings of a free and equitable government, to thoſe who are too ignorant to underſtand, and too languid to enjoy them.

Such is the favourable poſture of affairs in the Eaſt, and ſuch the aſſiſtance which our political ſyſtems may there give to the propagation of religious truth. If we turn our eyes towards ourſelves, we ſhall perceive many ſtriking diſcriminations of the preſent age, which, under judicious direction, may not be diſadvantageous to the cauſe of Chriſtianity. A ſpirit of adventure is gone forth among us; a ſpirit of experiment: it has infected our philoſophy, our religion, and our politics. It has perplexed vulgar minds in the mazes

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of error and abſurdity, and hurried away men of the brighteſt faculties into the dangerous extremes of ſubtlety and refinement.

Let us apply this reſtleſs principle to a labour of more general importance, and more obvious utility: let us preſent a nobler ſcheme for its contemplation, and a worthier object for its exertions. No longer buſied in fruitleſs projects, and groundleſs theories, let us apply it, where it will be attended with practical advantage, in converting and enlightening our colonies in the Eaſt.

Gratitude, compaſſion, patriotiſm, and above all, the yet nobler principle of Chriſtian charity, call loudly on us to communicate to others the bleſſings which we ourſelves enjoy; to publiſh the glad tidings of ſalvation among thoſe nations that now ſit in darkneſs, aliens from Chriſt, and ſtrangers to the covenant of grace: And while we declare to the ſavage

vage of America the joys and glories of everlaſting life, let us lead alſo the diſciple of Brama, and the follower of Mahomet, from the error of their ways, into the glorious light of the goſpel of peace.

To Omniſcience only are known the times and the ſeaſons. We cannot thwart the real purpoſes of Heaven by deliberate perverſeneſs or prepoſterous diligence. But the wiſh to forward them is always meritorious; the attempt, if conducted with prudence and with firmneſs, will procure us ſome reward; and ſurely, if in the moral government of the world, the Deity conveys temporal happineſs by the agency of his creatures, that agency becomes more ſplendid and more important, when it is wiſely and generouſly employed in promoting their eternal welfare. Though our powers and our efforts in carrying on the ſcheme I am now recommending to you into execution, ſhould be for a time ineffectual, the day will aſſuredly come, when

when others ſhall accompliſh what we may attempt in vain; when all the religions of the earth ſhall be changed into the worſhip of the one true God; when not only the Mahometan and Hindoo, but every nation and every kindred ſhall bow the knee at the name of JESUS; and when Chriſtian charity, like its almighty Author, ſhall finally ſubdue all things unto itſelf.

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FINIS.

ERRATUM.

P. 5. l. 23. *for* operation, *read* compreſſion.